



Editorial

Norman Goldstein MD
Editor, Hawaii Medical Journal

Special Issue on Alternative Medicine – Part II

We continue our series of papers presented at the Straub Foundation Seminars on Complimentary and Alternative Medicine (CAM). Part I appeared in the October 2001 issue of the Journal.

Indicative of the importance of CAM, the John A. Burns School of Medicine is planning to start a Department of Integrative Medicine. The manuscript "Integrative Medicine: An Academic Discipline?" is also published in this Special Issue. Mahalo to T. Samuel Shomaker, M.D., J.D., Vice Dean for Academic Affairs in our medical school for this review. Dr. Shomaker notes that Congress realizing that CAM has become a major health issue in the United States has created a National Center for Complimentary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM). The John A. Burns School of Medicine believes it is important to train our medical students about all the therapies their patients will receive. There is no doubt that we do need a Department of Integrative Medicine here in Hawaii.

This issue also includes a book review, *Meditation Medicine* by Dharma Singh Khalsa and Cameron Stauth. Mahalo to Charles De Mesa, M.P.H., an environmental science instructor, for this review.

A textbook book dealing with CAM was recently released: *The Clinical Practice of Complimentary, Alternative and Western Medicine*, by W. John Diamond, M.D. (e-mail: orders@crcpress.com). The list of monthly publications dealing with CAM continues to expand and includes *Alternative Medicine Alert* and *Alternative therapies in Women's Health* (e-mail: customerservice@ahc.com).



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E Lanalana E

This print depicts the unique Hawaiian "happy face" spider which is only found in Hawaii.



Letter to the Editor

Box Jellyfish in Waikiki

We applaud the work of Thomas et al, which appeared in the April 2001 issue of your journal. In this article they present carefully planned and analyzed data on the analgesic effect of hot and cold packs on Hawaiian jellyfish stings. In their article they differentiate between the use of an agent as inhibitors preventing discharge of unfired nematocyst adhering to the victim's skin and pain relief. The public and many physicians forget this distinction. It follows that the clinical importance of inhibiting the rupture of unfired nematocysts will depend upon their number and the incremental effect of adding their venom onto the pain already suffered by the patient. In most cases we think this would be small.

We have found that cold packs are of marginal use in sea nettle (*Chrysaora quinquecirrha*) sting and have the disadvantage of giving a small child a "chill". Heat application was unimpressive. On one occasion one of us (JB) stung his forearm with the Atlantic coast *Portuguese man-o-war* tentacles and rapidly immersed that area from wrist to elbow in a 42°C constant hot water bath for 15 min. That was all the thermal therapy he could tolerate. Two-minutes after removing the lymphangitic streaks appeared on the upper arm, so this practice was discontinued. Such an event did not appear in the present work probably because less heat was applied.

A minor point to be reviewed is the use of vinegar as a nematocyst inhibitor. It is an effective solution against the microscopic firing of Atlantic cast *Physalia* organelles in the laboratory. It is applied as a first aid measure even though it's clinical benefit is probably marginal. *Physalia utriculus*, *Physalia physalis* and a larger form of the later mulitenticular animal can be found in Queensland waters. Vinegar applicate arrests nematocyst discharge in the first two jellyfish but appears to stimulate firing of the organelle in the latter medusae. Because swimmers and lifeguards do not have time nor the opportunity to always identify the offending species recommended in reference 6 of the Thomas et al. paper to withhold vinegar from Australian patients has made. It is thus safe to say that we do not know whether vinegar should be recommended for use in Hawaii-a subject for these authors also to study.

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